Design Resource

Making of The Parrot Toy

The Wooden Craft of Varanasi

by
Prashant Sharma
IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:
https://dsource.in/resource/making-parrot-toy

1. Introduction
2. Place
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Introduction

Varanasi, the oldest city, often referred to as Banares and Kashi, is the most famous pilgrimage spot for Hindus for hundreds of years. Varanasi is visited by Hindus for the peace of mind and soul and to wash away all the sins. It is the Ghats of River Ganga in Varanasi that complement the concept of divinity.

The Art and culture of Varanasi is quite unique. It has rich cultural tradition with the combination of archaeology, mythology, history, geography and art that makes Varanasi a center of Indian culture.

Among these the 'Wooden toys' are one of the ancient craft of Varanasi. One can see shops selling traditional wooden toys, hand-crafted idols of Gods and Goddesses and their adaptation into wall hangings and showcase objects, which are quite famous and can be called a part of identity of Varanasi.

One of the most famous toys made here by the artisans is "**The Parrot-Toy**". The complete process of toy-making (Making of the Parrot –Toy) along with the street where toys are sold mostly (Gadauliya Street) and the people who make these toys (Toymakers) are discussed in next sections.

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Place

Gadauliya Street:

In Varanasi, the day starts with Prayers and Chants at the Ghats of River, while at the streets of Gadauliya a busy market sets up, with food and tea stalls along with other shopping items. Specialty of these stalls is that tea is served in clay cups called 'Kulhad'. This market consists of all types of shops. From food, sweets & tea stalls to wooden accessories like Sindoor Dani, Bangles, Mythological figures, Wall hangings, wooden parrot pencils, traditional wooden toys (chariots, boats, birds, animals etc.) and contemporary plastic toys.

There are number of temples on the banks of Ganga. Dedicated to Lord Shiva, Kashi Vishwanath Temple is the most famous one. Situated in Gadauliya, near Dasaswamedh Ghat, it is also a tourist place where people come to rest in peace and feel the spirituality in the air.

Food joints on road sides on busy streets of Gadauliya.

Food joints on road sides on busy streets of Gadauliya.

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Food joints on road sides on busy streets of Gadauliya.

Early morning tea, served in clay cups called 'Kulhad'.

Sweets and savories' shop.

People sipping tea in 'Kulhads' on a winter morning at crossroads 'Chowk'.

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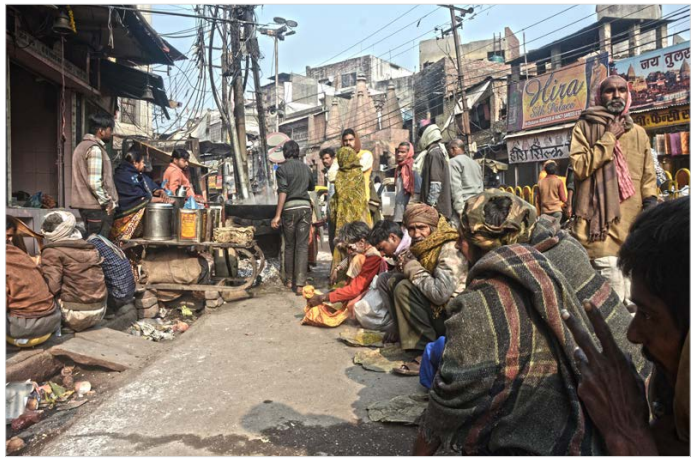
Open kitchens on roadside, preparing savories and sweets.



People eating free food, generally organised by devotees.

Saints in the vicinity of Ghat.

Stalls to sell articles for daily processions.

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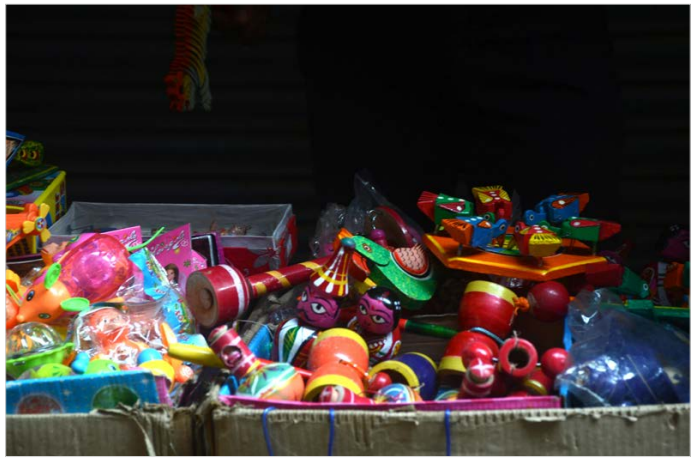
Shops specifically selling wedding articles, like garlands of currency note and Holy red colour, generally used in Hindu custom by married women.

Holly red colour called 'Sindoor' for married women.

Woman at a stall buying 'Sindoor Dani', container to keep the red colour.



Wooden toys at a stall.

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Women buying famous lacquer bangles at a stall.

Bangles being sold at a fancy stall in the same street.

A procession passing by Kashi Vishwanath Temple street.

Devotees standing in a queue to the temple.

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People from different states and regions come here to visit the temple.

One of the shop in temple street bustling with beautiful colourful wooden toys.

Idols of mythological figures at display.

Wooden parrot pencils on display in a shop.

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Mythological figure of flying Gods.

Flying mythological figures displayed.

Figures suspended from the ceiling.

Lord Krishna with his flute.

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Lord Ganpati standing on one leg.

Small idols make out of wood, no larger than a five rupee coin.

Wooden dolls displayed in a shop.

Very famous wooden toy, a set of ascending figures.

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Decorative wall hangings made with different types of figures and motifs.

Wall hangings with different mythological symbols like sun, Ganesha and Swastik sign accompanied by brass bells.

Set of Gods.

Set of contemporary orchestra.

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Set of animals.

Set of local folk musicians.

Decorated spin tops.

A boat with elephant head at one end.

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Peacock head on the other end.

Decorated pencils with miniature figures at the ends.

A box containing pencils painted similar to their accessory, fish.

Wooden chariots displayed in a shop.

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Display outside a shop.

A very local toy which makes noise, being sold by a hawker.

Shop selling traditional wooden toys and contemporary plastic toys.

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People

The Toy Makers:

Wooden toy makers are the few craftsmen, who are pursuing the art of toy making. There are families of craftsmen who have been making wooden toys for over generations. A set of artists are only skilled to make the toys of wood and finish the structure for paint job and there are separate families of artists whose soul job is to paint the toys.

Raju, one of the craftsmen, lives in Khajua, Kashmiri Ganj, a semi urban area, with his wife and two children. He learnt the craft of making wooden toys from his father. He has a small workshop with a setup of cutting, drilling and filing machine connected with amotor. This is quite an interesting unit which runs through conveyor belts. He has a co-worker, who assists him in his work.

They do not sell the toys directly in market. They make toys on order by a contractor in bulk, using a sample provided by the contractor, who pays them for cutting and filing. They take orders from foreign clients, who give them designs and then fabricate for them.

Selecting the right kind of wood for toys is very important. 'Kemah Chilbil' and 'Haldu' wood is used for making toys but they largely use Chilbil. The kind of toys they make depends on clients. Like butterflies, elephants etc., decorative articles like wall hangings, photo frames and jewelleries like earrings are also made by them. But one of the most famous toys made by these artisans is "**The Parrot-Toy**", which is adapted in different styles. The complete process of this famous toy "**Parrot**" is discussed in next sections.

House of Toy Maker:

Street outside Raju's house.

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Handloom worker on the street.

Hair dressing saloon.

Houses in the street.

Entrance to Raju's house's street.

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Entrance to Raju's house.

Raju's workshop.

Raju with his co-worker.

Raju's family.

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Painter's House:

Elderly involved in lighters tasks.

Mother and daughter.

Lady dealing with filing work of animal heads.

Boats made out of wood.

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Peacock head at one end on the boat.

Peacock and elephant heads, unpainted.

Peacock body on a painted boat.

Parrots' head drying in shade.

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Torso units drying in shade.

Collecting all dismantled parts of parrot in a sack.

Stacking the torso unit in a sack.

A girl with her wooden toys.

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Painting pineapple.

Paint brushes.

Wooden horse.

Wooden owls.

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Cow with a calf.

Intricate and really small sized sculptures of Gods and Goddesses.

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Process

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Cutting and Filing

Painting of the Parrot

Assembling the Parrot

Paint Workshops

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Cutting and Filing

Cutting:

The process of "Parrot Making" starts with selection of the wood. Wood is cleaned and cut in required small blocks. Different parts of parrot like torso, head and tail are drawn on the blocks. After drawing, the unwanted portion is cut from the block and shape is given to each piece. These parts (blocks) are then sliced into two halves.

Filing:

After cutting, filing process is carried out for smoothening and shaping of the parts of parrot. Finely smoothened and shaped parts (torso) are then joined together by applying glue to the opposite sides of a small cuboid. The unit is then nailed for a firm joint and filing is carried out for the combined unit. Holes are drilled, base of torso is glued to rectangular plank having two holes and other parts are attached.

Workshop with an intelligent set up. Single motor runs cutting and filing wheels together.

Raju in his workshop.

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Wood stock.

Selecting the appropriate size and shape of wood.

Sliced wooden blocks on 6 inches length.

Cleaning with sand paper to remove splinters.

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Making the drawing of a parrot on a 6 inches block.

Stencils being used for cutting marks.

Visible cutting marks.

Sliced into individual units using a cutting blade.

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Cutting out the unwanted portion.

Torso of parrot.

Shaping the torso.

Parrot's head.

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Shaping the head.

Shaping the tail.

Shaping butterfly.

Head, tail and torso blocks.

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Slicing each block into two halves.

Slicing the block into two halves.

Sliced blocks.

Passing sliced wood to file.

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Filing the parrot.

Filing the Butterfly.

Artist showing the filled parts of parrot and butterfly toys.

Filing the head.

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Finished head.

One side of finished torso.

Finished tail.

Finely smoothened and shaped parts.

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Applying glue to a small cuboid.

Pasting cuboid to one part of torso.

Pasting the other part of torso.

Nailing the unit for firm joint.

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Filing the combined unit.

Drilling parrot and butterflies.

Drilling hole in parrot.

Drilling hole in butterfly.

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Drilling on one end of the torso.

Drilling the other end.

Drilling a hole in head.

Drilling a hole in the tail.

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Applying glue to the base of torso unit.

Pasting the unit on a rectangular plank having two holes.

Nailing the plank to the torso.

Unpainted wooden structure.

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Painting of the Parrot

Once the toys are cut out of wood, they are sent to the painters. Rajkumar Prajapati, who lives around three kilometres away, does the job of painting. Almost all the members of family participate in this activity. Raju Prajapati is the one who holds the responsibility of getting the assignments and assuring the delivery in time.

While others members of Raju's family, which includes his father, mother, brother and his wife and children, contribute to the painting job as per their skill level and time.

The process of painting involves applying primer, the base coat. Filing with sand paper and then applying paint, once or twice, as per the requirement and then leaving them for drying in sun. Once the paint dries, varnish is applied to preserve the paint and to give a shiny and smooth surface to the toy.

They also actively participate in toy making competitions where they demonstrate their extreme skills by making complex figures like wooden sculptures of Gods and Goddesses smaller than two inches in height.

Mixing fluorescent green paint.

Painting torso unit.

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Painting meticulously.

Parrot's head.

Painting the tail.

Left for drying.

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Head and tail being dried on a wire.

Filing the dried surface using sandpaper.

Preparing dark green paint.

Decorating the torso.

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Wool is used for creating textures.

Soaking wool into green paint.

Creating texture on torso unit.

Creating texture on head.

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Creating patterns on the torso unit.

Painting the beak.

Decorating with black colour.

Making patterns on the torso unit.

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Detailing the beak.

Detailing the tail.

Left for drying.

Decorating with white colour.

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Decorating the top with motifs.

Making a cotton bud by wrapping cotton at the tip of a stick.

Picking red colour using cotton bud.

Making eye with red colour.

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Painting yellow for claws.

Painting the plank ochre.

Creating patterns on ochre plank.

Making cotton bud.

Design Resource

Making of The Parrot Toy

The Wooden Craft of Varanasi

by
Prashant Sharma
IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:
https://dsource.in/resource/making-parrot-toy/process/painting-parrot

1. Introduction
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3. People
4. Process
   4a. Cutting and Filing
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Picking white colour using cotton bud.

Painting white concentric over red circle.

Painting claws.

Making border to the plank.

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Painting black concentric over white circle.

Parrot's eye.

Varnishing the torso.

Varnishing the head.

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Varnishing the tail.

Left for drying.

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Assembling the Parrot

After completing the process of Cutting, Filing, Painting and Varnishing the surfaces of all the components; the Head, Torso, Tail of the Parrot-Toy and a wooden weight are assembled by using a cotton string.

Tying one end of a string at the bottom of the head on a nail.

Passing out the other end of string through one hole of the base of torso unit.

Passing the sting back in through second hole from the bottom of the base.

Tying the other end of string to the tail, using a nail.

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Passing a nail from drilled hole in torso and the tail, together.

Fixing the nail firmly onto the un-drilled torso wall.

Passing a nail through drilled hole in front of the torso.

Passing a nail from drilled hole in torso and the head, together.

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Fixing the nail firmly onto the un-drilled torso wall.

Tying both the loose ends on a nail.

Nailing the loose ends on a wooden ball.

Fixing the nail with a hammer.

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Ball hangs as a pendulum to oscillate and create movement in head and tail.

A boy with wooden parrot.

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Paint Workshops

Once the parts of Parrot-Toy are assembled together, completed with painting and varnishing of the products; the finished toys and accessories reaches the retailers and wholesalers, where these toys are assembled and small units are re-touched with paints, if any damage occurs. This retouching is done at the 'Paint workshops' which are near the Ghats of Varanasi.

Craftsman painting on the terrace.

A few sitting inside a room and painting.

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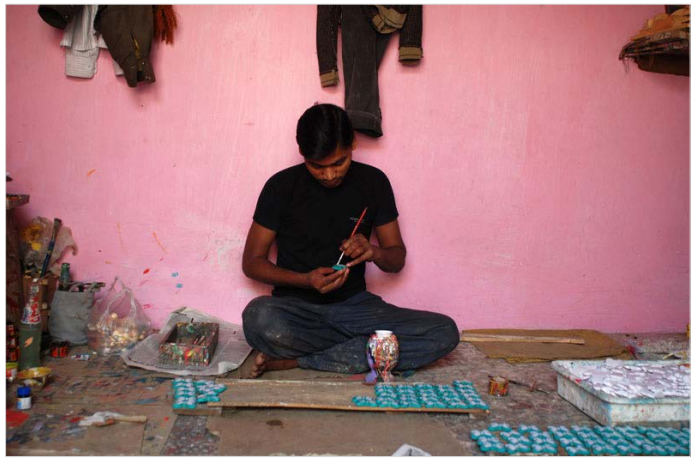

Everyone is busy finish the consignment.

These colourful wooden butterflies are left in sun to dry.

Butterflies are painted red.

A set of butterflies painted white.

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A few with patterns.

Tiny idols of God.

Different kinds of small animals, birds, mythological figures etc.

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This documentation was done by Prashant Sharma, IDC, IIT Bombay.

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